

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2225

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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CINCPAC

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 7450

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CB

SUBJ: FURTHER NEGOTIATING INITIATIVES FOR A KHMER SETTLEMENT
UNDER CONSIDERATION.

1. WE LEARNED JULY 21 THAT CHENG HENG AND IN TAM,
APPARENTLY ACTING INDEPENDENTLY OF EACH OTHER, ARE
SEEKING NEW WAYS TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE ELUSIVE
KHMER PERSONALITIES WHO COMPOSE GRUNK/FUNK.

2. CHENG HENG INFORMED ME THAT HE WILL SEEK APPROVAL
BY THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL AT ITS NEXT MEETING JULY
23 OF HIS PROPOSAL TO SEND MEN DULL, PRESIDENT OF THE
PHNOM PENH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, AS AN UNOFFICIAL AND
CONFIDENTIAL EMISSARY TO PARIS TO ASCERTAIN THROUGH
CONTACTS WHAT CONDITIONS THE OTHER SIDE WILL PLACE ON
ENTERING INTO IMMEDIATE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CEASE-FIRE
AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. IN CHENG HENG'S VIEW, MEN
DULL IS BETTER QUALIFIED AS AN EMISSARY THAN FORMER
PRIME MINISTER HANG THUN HAK, NOW IN PARIS FOR THIS PURPOSE
(AMONG OTHERS), SINCE HE HAS PLAYED NO POLITICAL ROLE
SINCE SIHANOUK'S OUSTER AND IS TRUSTED BY GRUNK
PRIME MINISTER PENN NOUTH AND PENN NOUTH'S FAMILY,
TWO OF WHOSE SONS ARE CLOSE ASSOCIATES OF MEN DULL IN
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PHNOM PENH. CHENG HENG ALSO COMMENTED THAT MEN DULL

HAS JUST RETURNED FROM PARIS AND BELIEVES THE OTHER SIDE WOULD BE RECEPTIVE OT THE RIGHT SORT OF OVERTURE (NO SPECIFICS JUSTIFYING THIS CONTENTION WERE FURNISHED). IF THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL APPROVES USING MEN DULL FOR THESE SOUNDINGS, HIS MISSION WILL BE CAMOUFLAGED AS A PRIVATE BUSINESS TRIP.

3. SO NEM, A NATIONAL BANK OFFICIAL OF NEUTRAL COLORATION BUT LEFTIST PERSUASION, REQUESTED AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME, ALSO ON JULY 21, TO DISCUSS AN APPROACH MADE TO HIM BY IN TAM TO UNDERTAKE A VERY SIMILAR SECRET MISSION, PROBABLY ALSO IN PARIS, WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF GETTING TALKS STATRTED AMONG THE KHMER. A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF IENG SARY (WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS A MARXIST-LENINIST TEN YEARS AGO AT THE TIME HE DISAPPEARED) AND OTHER KHMER LEFTISTS SUCH AS KHIEU SAMPHAN AND HOU NIM, SO NEM WOULD SEEK TO MAKE CONTACT WITH COMMUNIST RATHER THAN SIHANOUKIST REPRESENTATIVES IN PARIS. HE INDICATED THAT HE REGARDS THE ODDS AGAINST THE SUCCESS OF ANY SUCH MISSION AS VERY HIGH, GIVEN THE FAVORABLE MILITARY POSITION OF THE INSURGENTS; BUT HE SAID HE IS READY TO UNDERTAKE IT IF IN TAM SO INSTRUCTS. (SO NEM, NOT SURPRISINGLY SINCE HE DESIRES RATHER SWEEPING SOCIAL REFORM, BELIEVES THAT IN TAM'S CONTINUATION AS PRIME MINISTER IS ESSENTIAL IF THERE IS TO BE ANY CHANCE OF DEVELOPING GREATER POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE CAUSE OF THE REPUBLIC).

4. BOTH CHENG HENG AND SO NEM ASKED ME IF THE MISSIONS THEY DESCRIBED WOULD IN ANY WAY OBSTRUCT OR JEOPARDIZE NEGOTIATIONS WE MIGHT HAVE UNDER WAY, IN PARTICULAR WITH THE CHINESE OR GRUNK. I ASSURED EACH OF THEM THAT OUR WHOLE EFFORT IS DIRECTED TO FACILITATING TALKS AMONG KHMER AND HELPING TO BRING ABOUT A CEASE-FIRE; WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE KHMER QUESTION CAN BE SETTLED ABOVE THE HEADS OF THE KHMER, AND WE THEREFORE WELCOME ANY INITIATIVES WHICH THEY TAKE TO SEEK TO IDENTIFY NEGOTIATORS FOR THE OTHER SIDE AND A COMMON BASIS FOR OPENING TALKS. I TOLD THEM AS WELL THAT I APPRECIATED THEIR TAKING US INTO THEIR CONFIDENCE AND THAT WE WOULD RESPECT THEIR
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DESIRE FOR SECRECY.

5. COMMENT. WE SHOULD NOT PLACE GREAT HOPE IN EITHER OF THESE MISSIONS, SHOULD THEY MATERIALIZE. THEY NONETHELESS REFLECT A GROWING AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR FRESH EFFORTS LOOKING TOWARD SOME ACCOMNODATION, AN AWARENESS DUE NOT ONLY TO THE APPROACH OF AUGUST 15 AND THE LIKELY TERMINATION OF OUR AIR COMBAT SUPPORT BUT ALSO TO THE

THREATENING POSTURE OF ENEMY FORCES AROUND PHNOM PENH.SWANK

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